

DWD has sent out \$3B in unemployment since March 15

Posted on Thursday, Aug 6, 2020

Since March 15, the Department of Workforce Development paid 475,000 people over \$3 billion but says more federal unemployment compensation is needed.

The \$600 per week supplement — Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation — ended the week ended last month.

“We’re watching negotiations out in D.C. for any extension or replacement very closely,” said DWD Secretary Caleb Frostman in a Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce briefing. “We’ve advocated for the extension of the \$600-a-week benefit, understanding that it’s temporary in nature.”

Having up to 10 percent of the workforce living on a maximum of \$370 per week is a “pretty grim prospect,” Frostman said, adding that an additional stimulus is also critical as an economic stimulus in order to keep families and the state’s economy afloat.

In four and a half months, DWD fielded 833,000 initial claims — almost triple of the initial claims filed in all of 2019. The department peaked in late March with a couple of weeks over 100,000 initial claims, but has seen sustained levels in the 20,000-30,000 initial claims since June.

Last week, DWD dipped into the high teens at unofficially about 17,000 initial claims.

“With those types of numbers and that kind of volume, obviously our workload at DWD remains quite high,” Frostman said.

However, the department is seeing a sustained high level of both recurring claims and issues that require adjudication, but Frostman said he’s optimistic that his team can clear it.

“Since March, we have essentially quadrupled our UI personnel resources,” he said.

DWD went from 500 people working on UI to just over 2,000 people in the last four and a half months. The department added 450 adjudicators and expanded phones from 60 in March to 800 today.

“We’re grateful that we’re making strong progress,” Frostman said.

-By Stephanie Hoff

WisBusiness.com